

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM USINT HAVANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1559

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HAVANA 0876

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR MILI SO ET AO CU RH

SUBJ: CODEL DIGGS -- VISIT TO HAVANA AND CONVERSATION WITH
PRESIDENT CASTRO

1. SUMMARY. WHILE BRIEF, CODEL VISIT TO HAVANA ACCOMPLISHED MAIN OBJECTIVES INCLUDING LONG MEETING WITH CASTRO. LATTER TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO WHAT HE CALLED DELIBERATE USG MISREPRESENTATIONS OF CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA WHICH DISTURB NORMALIZATION PROCESS. HE DENIED THAT THERE ARE CUBAN MILITARY "UNITS" IN ERITREA, AND SAID HE BELIEVED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT THERE IS DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE. CASTRO REAFFIRMED CUBAN ROLE IS TO PROTECT TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ETHIOPIA AND ANGOLA. HE GAVE NO SUGGESTION OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN AFRICA BUT ASSERTED CUBAN WOULD NOT GET BOGGED DOWN IN ANGOLA'S INTERNAL STRUGGLE. WHILE ADMITTING POLITICAL, MATERIEL AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE TO LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, CASTRO SAID THAT NO CUBAN FIGHTING FORCES HAVE BEEN SENT THERE THUS FAR. HE CALLED FOR LIFTING OF EMBARGO BUT MAINTAINED THAT CUBA WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE WITH U.S. OR COMPROMISE ON ITS ROLE IN AFRICA TO ACHIEVE THIS RESULT END SUMMARY

2. CODEL DIGGS VISITED HAVANA FOR 25 HOURS ON APRIL 3-4, 1978. THIS BIREF VISIT INCLUDED BRIEFINGS FROM AGRICULTURE
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MINISTER RAFAEL FRANCIA MESTRE AND EDUCATION MINISTER JOSE RAMON FERNANDEZ ALVAREZ, A TOUR OF PLAN CEIBA--A STATE FARM SPECIALIZING IN CITRUS AND CATTLE AND A MORE THAN THREE HOUR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CASTRO. FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHTS OF LATTER CONVERSATION ARE BASED ON NOTES PREPARED BY DEPARTMENT'S ESCORT OFFICER LANPHER WHO ATTENDED MEETING; IT WAS NOT CLEARED BY CONGRESSMAN DIGGS PRIOR TO HIS

DEPARTURE.

3. CONGRESSMAN OPENED CONVERSATION WITH A REVIEW OF IMPRESSIONS FROM HIS VISIT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE URGENT NEED FOR ACTION ON GENUINE MAJORITY RULE THERE. CASTRO EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO LAGOS AND HIS SPEECH. CASTRO WAS GIVEN COMPLETE TEXT WHICH HE IMMEDIATELY ORDERED TO BE TRANSLATED.

4. SITUATION IN THE HORN.

A. CASTRO REFERRED TO REPORTS OUT OF LAGOS WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO A "PERSONALITY" WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S PARTY TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE ARE NOW 16 TO 17 THOUSAND CUBAN TROOPS IN ETHIOPIA. WHILE NOT WILLING TO GIVE TRUE FIGURES HE SAID THESE WERE "EXAGGERATED ON PURPOSE", AND THAT ALLEGATION THAT THERE ARE CUBAN "UNITS" IN ERITREA WAS A "DELIBERATE LIE". HERE AND AT SEVERAL OTHER POINTS IN CONVERSATION CASTRO ASKED RHETORICALLY WHO IS BEHIND THIS "ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN" IN U.S. TO MISREPRESENT CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA AND TO USE IT TO DISTURB NORMALIZATION PROCESS IN RELATIONS WITH CUBA.

B. CASTRO SAID THAT CUBA HAD NOT ANTICIPATED SOMALI INVASION OF OGADEN, WHICH VIOLATED SIAD'S PLEDGE, AND HAD THEREFORE NOT PREVIOUSLY FORESEEN REQUIREMENT FOR LARGE CUBAN MILITARY FORCES IN ETHIOPIA. HE REPEATEDLY ATTACKED SIAD BARRE AS THE "GREAT DECEIVER", A "TREMENDOUS LIAR" WHO
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CANNOT BE TRUSTED BY ANYONE ("SOVIETS, ARABS OR U.S."). REMINDING CODEL THAT ETHIOPIAN ASSURANCES THAT THEIR FORCES WOULD NOT CROSS FRONTIER HAVE BEEN HONORED, CASTRO SAID THAT SOMALIA IS NOT THREATENED BY ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS AND THAT IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS FOR U.S. TO GIVE ARMS TO SIAD WHO WOULD BE LIKELY TO USE THEM FOR RENEWED ATTACK AGAINST ETHIOPIA. SUCH U.S. ASSISTANCE WOULD INDICATE U.S. SUPPORT FOR AGGRESSION. ON THE OTHER HAND, CASTRO SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO U.S. FOOD AND DISASTER RELIEF FOR SOMALIA.

C. CASTRO OBSERVED THAT THE PROVISION OF CUBAN TROOPS TO ETHIOPIA IN RESPONSE TO GOE REQUEST HAD PRESENTED A "DIFFICULT MORAL QUESTION" FOR CUBA, BUT THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE DISINTEGRATION OF ETHIOPIA. THE U.S. ARGUMENT THAT THE CRISIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT TO THE AFRICANS THEMSELVES THROUGH OAU WAS NOT FAIR SINCE THE U.S. DID NOT ADOPT THAT POSITION EARLIER WHEN SOMALIA INVADED OGADEN.

D. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN DIGGS' INQUIRY ABOUT FUTURE IN ERITREAN SITUATION, CASTRO STATED THAT CUBA WILL SUPPORT ETHIOPIA TO PREVENT DISINTEGRATION OF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY. HE ALSO SAID THAT ETHIOPIA MUST RETAIN ITS OUTLET TO SEA AND CANNOT BECOME AN AFRICAN

BOLIVIA. ON OTHER HAND, CASTRO SAID THAT CUBA FAVORS A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA AS PART OF A UNIFIED ETHIOPIA. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE AND CASTRO SAID HE BELIEVES A PEACEFUL SOLUTION CAN BE REACHED. ETHIOPIA IS NOW IN A STRONGER MILITARY POSTURE AND THIS MAY FACILITATE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. (PRESUMABLY, THESE COMMENTS ALLUDE TO POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARTIAL AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA, ALTHOUGH CASTRO ALSO DECLARED THAT AN "ETHNIC FEDERATION" IS NOT POSSIBLE IN ETHIOPIA WITH OVER 80 ETHNIC GROUPS.) E. MORE GENERALLY, CASTRO SAID THAT THE ETHIOPIAN REGIME IS CONSTRUCTIVE, WILL FIGHT FOR ITS UNITY, BUT HAS NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ON OTHERS. ITS RELATIONS WITH SUDAN, KENYA AND DJIBOUTI WERE SAID TO BE IMPROVING. IN
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FINAL COMMENT ON ETHIOPIA, CASTRO SAID "NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS".

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5. SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.
A. CASTRO EMPHASIZED THAT THE CUBAN ROLE IN ANGOLA IS NOT TO FIGHT AGAINST INTERNAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION OVER LONG HAUL, WHICH IS A JOB FOR ANGOLA'S OWN FORCES, BUT RATHER TO "ASSIST AGAINST FOREIGN AGGRESSION TO PRESERVE THE REVOLUTION". HE SAID THAT CUBA WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUPPLIES BUT IT IS ABSURD TO THINK THAT "WE WILL BECOME INVOLVED IN A VIETNAM-TYPE SITUATION". WHILE ADMITTING THAT UNITA HAS GOOD LEADERSHIP AND ROOTS AMONG

THE TRIBES, CASTRO ARGUED THAT MPLA HAS STRONG POPULAR BASE AND THAT NETO IS PRUDENT, SERIOUS AND ABSOLUTELY HONEST. WHILE PREDICTING THAT NETO FACES A PROTRACTED INTERNAL STRUGGLE, CASTRO PROFESSED SATISFACTION WITH PROGRESS MADE AND GAVE NO SUGGESTION THAT RECONCILIATION AMONG INTERNAL POLITICAL FORCES IN ANGOLA IS POSSIBLE OR DESIRABLE. (IN AN INTERESTING FOOTNOTE, CASTRO SAID THAT HAD NETO BEEN DEPOSED IN AN INTERNAL COUP, CUBA WOULD HAVE LEFT ANGOLA.)

B. EMPHASIZING CUBA'S NON-MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS IN ANGOLA, CASTRO CITED ASSISTANCE IN RESTORING COFFEE PRODUCTION, IMPROVEMENTS IN ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY, MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. WHEREAS ALL CUBAN ASSISTANCE IN 1977 WAS DONATED, CASTRO SAID THAT ANGOLA WILL PAY FOR SOME HELP IN 1978 (WHETHER IN DIRECT PAYMENTS OR INDIRECT REIMBURSEMENT WAS NOT CLEAR). CODEL COMMENTED THAT HERE AS IN OTHER PARTS OF

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DISCUSSION CASTRO EMPHASIZED THAT THERE ARE LIMITS ON CUBA'S RESOURCES TO HELP OTHERS.

C. AS IN THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA (ABOVE) CASTRO VOICED DISTRESS AND PUZZLEMENT THAT CUBAN ROLE IN ANGOLA SHOULD HAVE BECOME A MAJOR ISSUE IN U.S.-CUBAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. HE DECLARED THAT CUBA COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT TURN ITS BACK ON AFRICA SINCE THAT WOULD DISCREDIT CUBA. CUBA CANNOT NEGOTIATE WITH THE U.S. ON THIS BASIS. THE TIME WILL COME, HOWEVER, WHEN THE AFRICAN STATES WILL NO LONGER NEED CUBAN ASSISTANCE.

D. WITH RESPECT TO ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA PROBLEMS, CASTRO CLAIMED THAT CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE NEARBY AND SUPPORT FOR POPULAR FRONT, SWAPO AND ANC HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN MAINTAINING DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON SMITH AND VORSTER WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE INTRANSIGENT. CUBAN PRESENCE HAS ALSO FORCED U.S. AND U.K. TO TAKE MORE SERIOUS INTEREST IN THE AREA, HE ASSERTED. "CASTRO ASKED CODEL TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENCE THAT CUBA HAS SENT MATERIEL AND INSTRUCTORS TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS SINCE THEY HAVE NOT YET ACKNOWLEDGED THIS ASSISTANCE PUBLICLY.) CASTRO WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHILE THE POPULAR FRONT IS NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT SMITH MILITARILY AND THE STRUGGLE WILL BE PROTRACTED, TIME IS RUNNING AGAINST SMITH. HIS INTERNAL SOLUTION IS ATTEMPT TO SPLIT LIBERATION FORCES. CASTRO ALSO OBSERVED THAT MOZAMBIQUE IS WELL ORGANIZED FOR DEFENSE AND ZAMBIA IS ALSO GAINING STRENGTH.

E. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN DIGGS' QUESTION, CASTRO SAID HE DOES NOT KNOW NKOMO/MUGABE POSITION WITH RESPECT TO U.S. PROPOSAL FOR ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE ON ZIMBABWE. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THERE IS ANY POSSIBILITY

OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IF THAT CONFERENCE IS NOT SUCCESSFUL,
CASTRO SAID THAT CUBA PREFERS NOT TO SEND FIGHTING FORCES
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THERE BUT HE CANNOT MAKE ANY CATEGORIC STATEMENTS IN THIS
REGARD BECAUSE FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES CANNOT BE FULLY
FORESEEN. THE FINAL OBJECTIVE REMAINS A JUST AND
INDEPENDENT, NOT NEO-COLONIALIST ZIMBABWE. THUS FAR,
HE REPEATED, CUBA HAS LIMITED ITS SUPPORT TO INTERNATIONAL
FORA, MATERIEL AND TRAINING. NO FURTHER COMMITMENT HAS
BEEN MADE OR EVEN REQUESTED. HERE AGAIN CASTRO EMPHASIZED
THAT CUBAN RESOURCES AND POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITED AND
THEY CAN'T BE EVERYWHERE AT THE SAME TIME.

6. BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH U.S.

A. CASTRO TOLD CODEL THAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE
IN U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS (ESTABLISHMENT OF
INTERESTS SECTIONS, MARITIME BOUNDARIES AGREEMENT,
RELEASE OF SOME AMERICAN PRISONERS, IMPROVED DIALOGUE,
ETC.) BUT THAT THE PUBLIC CONTROVERSY OVER CUBA'S
AFRICAN POLICY IS A "COMPLICATION". HE AGAIN
ARGUED THAT RAW FACTS OF CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA
AS PUBLICIZED BY U.S. HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN WRONG OR
GROSSLY MAGNIFIED. HE SPECULATED THAT THIS
MAY BE A PRETEXT IN U.S. FOR MAINTAINING THE EMBARGO
AGAINST CUBA. IT WOULD BE NOT ONLY MORALLY CORRECT
BUT ALSO WISE POLICY FOR U.S. TO LIFT THE EMBARGO, HE
ARGUED, SINCE U.S. WOULD INEVITABLY INCREASE ITS
INFLUENCE IN CUBA THROUGH THE INCREASED CONTACTS WHICH
WOULD FLOW FROM SUCH ACTION. AT PRESENT, HE WENT ON, U.S.
GAINS NOTHING FROM EMBARGO WHICH IN ADDITION CONFLICTS
WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IN ANY
CASE, HE SAID, CUBA WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ON ITS PRINCIPLES
OR TOLERATE ANY CONDITIONS ON LIFTING THE EMBARGO SUCH
AS REMOVING TROOPS FROM AFRICA. RATHER THAN SUCH A
COMPROMISE CUBA WOULD RATHER HAVE THE EMBARGO FOREVER.
CUBA ENJOYS RESPECT IN THE THIRD WORLD, CASTRO CONCLUDED,
AND THE "U.S. SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE US".

B. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS NOTED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA
WERE ALSO AN ISSUE IN THE U.S. AFFECTING NORMALIZATION
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OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA. CASTRO OBSERVED THAT HE RECEIVES
LETTERS DIRECTLY FROM U.S. SENATORS ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION
AND SIMILAR MATTERS.

7. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

A. CASTRO EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT WORLD
ENERGY PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY HIGH OIL PRICES.

B. HE ALSO SPOKE OF THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF THE
DETERIORATING VALUE OF THE DOLLAR ON CUBA'S EARNINGS
FROM SUGAR. HE SAID IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO AMEND THE
NEW INTERNATIONAL SUGAR AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN
THE REALINCOME OF SUGAR PRODUCERS.

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